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Owner of Las Estrellas restaurant opens a new bar and grill, Baby'O

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The band Sin Recursos plays at the new latin nightclub Baby'O.
(Journal photo by Kelly Bennett)

Sal Bravo was born in Guadalajara, Mexico, and grew up in California farming and playing professional soccer.

At 19, he moved back to Mexico for two years, then he moved to Winston-Salem where he started a successful restaurant, Las Estrellas, on Silas Creek Parkway. Customers see him there daily working with his wife, Anna, and his mother, Celia.

Bravo's family and business partner, Pedro Valenzo, opened a bar and grill three weeks ago at the Marketplace Mall complex.

It's called Baby'O, and it is in the space that once housed the Metal Rebel bar, which closed in September.

Bravo sat down recently to talk about his life, business and plans for his new place.

Q. How did you come up with the name Baby'O for your new bar and grill?

A. It's the name of a club in Mexico.

Q. Do you own the building?

A. We're buying all of what's inside the building, and we're leasing the building.

Q. What are your plans for Baby'O?

A. Baby'O is going to be like an Hispanic/American bar and grill where we might have some live bands coming in.

We've got a giant-screen TV ... for live games.... Soccer's going to be the biggest thing here.

Q. What's on the menu?

A. Right now, we're adding some of Las Estrellas, seafood plates and steaks. We're going to have shrimp, steaks and wings.

When summer kicks in - we've got a big patio - I'm going to have some beach sand out there, some volleyball. I'll put a nice grill out there and grill some steaks.

Q. Who is your market?

A. We want to make this like a multicultural thing where everybody can come in and be welcome. Old, young, where they can come up here and dance a little bit, eat a little bit....

I want to make it a nice place where as soon as you walk in the door, you feel good. Where you can relax and do some salsa, some rumba, some meringue, some hip-hop, a little bit of everything.

Q. When did you move to California with your mother and brother?

A. In '71, when I was 6 months old.

Q. What did you do in California growing up?

A. I was a farmer, picking up crops like tomatoes, cucumbers, peaches, oranges, apricots and garlic. I did everything.... I worked real hard there. I lived in Gilroy - garlic capital of the world.

Q. Did farming give you a strong work ethic?

A. You're always wet - sweaty and wet. Cold in the morning, hot in the afternoon.

We dropped out of school to make money because it was tight.... I had to. We were poor. But I made a lot of money playing soccer.

Q. What has business been like since you opened Las Estrellas in 2000?

A. It took me three weeks to know exactly what I wanted. It took me six months to open.... I get new customers every day.

Q. Why?

A. The way we cook. The way we cook is saute, on the spot, at the time, no frozen stuff - just fresh produce, fresh seafood, fresh meats.... The fish stays on ice, the shrimp stays in ice. We just try to keep it fresh, and people know it. I just make people feel like it's their house.

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